

Ethics News

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New Ethics Director Announced

Laura L. Forest was appointed on June 5 by Governor Mitch Daniels as the new Ethics Commission Director. Ms. Forest replaces Mary Lee Comer, who now serves as special counsel to the Commission.

Ms. Forest recently completed a three-year direct commission with the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps where she held the rank of captain. She was most recently assigned as the 3rd Recruiting Brigade Judge Advocate at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Her duties included serving as the brigade's ethics counselor, which involved responding to ethics questions and providing annual ethics training to soldiers and federal civilian employees. Forest also participated in investigations involving alleged standards of conduct violations and worked closely with the Army's Office of the Inspector General.

Prior to her Fort Knox assignment, Ms. Forest served in Hanau, Germany, as a legal assistant and claims attorney.

Ms. Forest received her undergraduate degree from Denison University and her law degree from Indiana University Law School – Indianapolis.

What does the Ethics Director do?

The Director is responsible for overseeing all agency administrative, legislative and legal activity, plus the supervision of staff. The Director also responds to questions on the state ethics code from state employees, officers and the general public.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. My agency has entered into a contract with a vendor to purchase software, and the vendor has offered to pay my hotel and airfare to attend a meeting at their East Coast office to review the software design. Is acceptance of hotel and travel expenses permissible under the ethics rules?

A. The gift rule ([42 IAC 1-5-1](#)) would generally prohibit a state employee or special state appointee from accepting travel expenses from a person who has a business relationship with the employee's or appointee's agency. A business relationship includes "dealings of a person with an agency seeking, obtaining, establishing, maintaining, or implementing a pecuniary interest in a contract" with the agency.

The law, however, provides for certain exceptions to the gift rule. In your case, there is no exception that would apply. The rule also permits the employee's state officer or appointing authority to waive application of the rule in limited circumstances when deemed "consistent with the public interest." The gift rule requires that a waiver must meet the following elements: (1) be in writing; and (2) identify the following: (A) the employee or special state appointee; (B) the nature and value of the gift; (C) the donor of the gift; (D) why acceptance of the gift is consistent with the public interest. The gift rule requires that written waivers must be filed with the Ethics Commission within thirty (30) days of receipt of the gift.

Determining whether a waiver would be "consistent with the public interest" is fact sensitive. Merely saving the State the cost of travel expenses would not justify a waiver; however, if your travel were deemed required by the contract in order to customize the software, a waiver may be viewed as appropriate. If a waiver were granted, your state officer or appointing authority would need to ensure compliance with the waiver approval criteria outlined in the above paragraph.

Q. I am a state employee and would like to know if I may be a precinct committee person?

A. You may be a precinct committee person when not on duty. However, since you are a state employee, you may not:

- (1) engage in any political activity while on state time or acting in your official capacity;
- (2) solicit political contributions from employees that you supervise; and
- (3) solicit political contributions from persons having a business relationship with your agency.

Furthermore, if you are a state employee with procurement authority, you may not solicit political contributions for any candidate for public office (The only exception is if you are running for office, you then may solicit contributions for your campaign). This prohibition also pertains to appointing authorities and to special state appointees with procurement authority.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who is responsible for investigating ethics violations?

A. The Office of the Inspector General (<http://www.in.gov/ig/>) investigates ethics complaints, criminal activity and inefficiency within the Executive Branch of state government. The Inspector General does not have jurisdiction over the Legislative or Judicial Branches of state government.

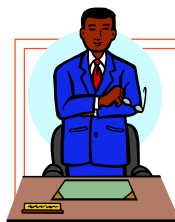
Q. Are Executive Branch lobbyists required to register with the state?

A. Effective January 1, 2006, the executive branch lobbying rule requires that all executive branch lobbyists file an initial Executive Branch Lobbyist Registration Statement with the Indiana Department of Administration (IDOA). Lobbyists have fifteen business days from the date of initial contact with an executive branch agency to file with the state. For more information go to: <<http://www.in.gov/idoa/eblr/index.html>>.

Q. What is the difference between formal advisory opinions and informal opinions regarding questions concerning the ethics rules?

A. Formal opinions are given by the five members who are appointed by the Governor to the Ethics Commission. These opinions are in writing and are binding on the Commission. They are issued at the Commission's monthly public meetings.

Informal opinions are given by Commission staff. If you have an urgent question requiring immediate action or a question, which does not warrant a formal opinion, you should submit a written request for ethics advice via the Commission's Web site (See box below for seeking advice).



Please note: Formal advisory opinions may be found on the Commission's Web site at <<http://www.in.gov/ethics/advis/>>.

If you have a question, which you would like answered, [click here](#).

Do You Know Who Your Ethics Officer is?

If you have an ethics question, you also may contact your Ethics Officer. To find your Ethics Officer, [click here](#).

2006 Ethics Training Schedule

All classes are held in the State Conference Center (IGC South).
402 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Please check the Conference Center Directory the day of class
as rooms are subject to change.

Ethics Orientation 10:00- 11:00 a.m.

July 18	Conference Center Room 14
September 12	Conference Center Room 14
November 14	Conference Center Room 17

Ethics for Supervisors and Managers 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

July 12	Conference Center Room 4
September 27	Conference Center Room 4
November 15	Conference Center Room 4

Ethics for Executives (Agency Heads, Ethics Officers, & Upper Management) 10:00 - 12:00

August 9	Conference Center Room 18
October 17	Conference Center Room 18

Any of the above classes count as orientation or refresher training.
These classes also are offered online at:
<<http://www.in.gov/ethics/training/>>.

Employees may [register online](#) through the Ethics Commission,
or through [PeopleSoft](#). See your
[ATCP](#) for more information.

Call Mary Hill at 233-3767, if you would like on-site training for your agency.

Remember!

Ethics training is mandatory for new employees and special state appointees within six weeks of their date of hire. Thereafter, every employee and special state appointee is required to have ethics refresher training every two years.